not yet erased

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by stansthemans

Summary

Ford learns about one of the darker aspects of Stan's life at a very inopportune time.

Notes

Anon request on tumblr "Stan sex work ptsd with Ford finding out during their first time goes brrrrrr in my brain"

Sliding into the tight heat of Stan's body should be amazing, transcendental, the most glorious physical experience of Ford's life. For a moment, it is. For a moment, everything is perfection. His brother loves him, loves him in all the ways that Ford loves him in return. They have exchanged words of love and gentle kisses. Kisses that grow more and more heated as hands become more and more desperate. Desperate to touch, to feel every inch of each other, to memorize smooth planes and raised scars.

Stan's moans as Ford rolls his hips are so beautiful, music to his ears. The way he clenches around Ford's cock, providing him with the most perfect pressure, it should only be obscene, but it too is beautiful. Feather light, Ford kisses his brother's back, over the burn scar from so many years ago, and Stanley shudders.

"Getting—fuck—getting sentimental on me, Sixer," Stanley says, rocking back to meet him.

Another kiss, an apology he has already spoken so many times, and will continue to speak. "Yes," Ford says. "For you, absolutely."

"Sap," Stan says, and Ford hears the truth in that statement, that Stan adores him too, that this is good, it's perfect. "You can do more. I ain't gonna break." He pushes his hips back hard to meet Ford's next thrust, proving his point in the most delicious way.

Ford groans, his fingers digging deeper into the soft skin at Stan's hips, deep enough to bruise. Yes, he wants that. He wants to mark Stan as his, lay complete claim to him. If anyone were ever in an opportunity to see these bruises, Ford is sure he would lose the entirety of his mind, but he wants those marks dark and deep—replenished each time they begin to fade—on Stan's skin so that there can be no doubt that Stan belongs to him.

And if Stan is his, then it is Ford's responsibility to give him what he wants. Ford picks up his pace, his thrusts harder and deeper. "Oh fuck," Stan shouts. His arms, thick with corded muscle, tremble with the effort of supporting himself, and soon enough, he drops down to his forearms, back curved in a gorgeous arch. And Ford doesn't have to wonder for even a second if the change of position is good, if it will lead to a truly glorious prize, because on the next thrust in, Stan is screaming into the pillow.

Ford pounds into him harder, desperate to hear more of those beautiful moans, desperate to make Stan feel better than he ever has in his life. But that pillow, that detestable pillow, is muffling those perfect moans, the transcendent sound of Ford's name spilling from his brother's lips. "No, Stanley," Ford moans. "Let me hear you." And he curls his fingers into Stanley's sweat damp hair and sharply tugs him back up.

It is in that instant that everything changes.

Stanley goes rigid, and the whimper that escapes his lips is not one of pleasure. Ford freezes, his own blood like ice in his veins. "Stanley," he asks, low and careful. "Stanley, are you—"

"Fine," Stan chokes out, and the one word alone is broken glass.

Ford eases his grip, both on Stan's hair and hip, and pulls out slowly. "N-no," Stan stammers. "No, it's—Ford, it's fine. It's fine. It's nothing."

Ford helps Stan to sit back, helps him fold his legs in a manner that won't strain his knees or hips. "It is clearly not fine," Ford says, cupping Stan's face. Not only is Stan very noticeably no longer hard, but he's begun to tremble like a leaf. It's not the good sort of trembling it was earlier, when they had first pressed their bodies together, when they had said with plain and uncompromising words how they love each other.

"It is," Stan says through his teeth, but the sweat on his forehead is cold, and his face is ashen, and his eyes are quickly growing distant. "It's fine. It's fine. It's—"

Ford folds Stan into his arms, holds him tight against his chest. Stan clings back, blunt nails digging into Ford's skin. "I've got you," Ford says firmly. "I'm right here, Stanley. I've got you."

He does not say that it's fine, because it isn't right now. He doesn't say that it will be ok, because he doesn't know what is going on in Stan's mind. He does, however, recognize a panic attack when he sees one. He does recognize that far off look of someone slipping into the past. It's agony to know that he can't stop it, can't protect his brother from his own memories. All Ford can do is sit there, hold him, promise him that he's there, he isn't leaving, he'll always be right here, he loves him.

Ford doesn't know how long it takes before Stanley's breathing begins to steady, before the desperate way he clings to Ford eases just the slightest bit. Ford pets at his brother's hair, squeezes gently on the back of his neck. "Are you here," he asks, voice a low whisper. "Are you back with me?"

"I—I'm sorry," Stan gasps, and Ford's heart breaks.

"No," he says, pulling back just enough to cup Stanley's face, to look into his wet, red-rimmed eyes. "No, Stanley. No, you don't—can I kiss you?"

"Please," Stan begs, the tears falling from his eyes. Ford pulls him forward, lips slotting against Stan's, desperate to tell him in this way too that he's here and he loves him.

"What happened," Ford asks, thumbs wiping the tears away. "What did I do?"

"Naw," Stan says, kissing him again all too sweetly. "Wasn't you."

"It clearly was," Ford says, distressed but trying very hard to not lose control himself because he hurt his brother. His teeth are on edge, but he knows if he loses control, it will only be worse for Stan, and he will not make it worse. "Everything was—it was so perfect but then I pulled your hair and—" Ford stops short. "I pulled your hair."

"I—uh—I guess I don't like that," Stan grumbles, and he won't meet Ford's eyes. There are certainly plenty of indicators to choose from that this situation is serious, but that's the biggest one. Stan is certainly capable of lying while looking someone directly in the eyes, but

not Ford. Ford has always been able to see everything there, no matter how much Stan wants to hide it.

Ford folds his hands over Stan's, intertwining their fingers. "It's more than that," Ford says. Stan still doesn't look at him. "Please, love," Ford says. "We—we have to talk about things. I know we're bad at that, but there are so many bad things that wouldn't have happened if we'd just bothered to talk to each other. I don't—I can't hurt you like this. Please, Stanley."

For a long moment, they simply sit there, holding tight to each other's hands. Stan still isn't looking at him, but Ford cannot tear his eyes away. He watches everything, every slight twitch of Stan's frowning lips, the clenching of his jaw, his throat working around a lump. A desperate part of Ford wants to demand that Stan speak, grab hold of him tight and shake until he spills. But that would only make things worse. He has to wait, even if the wait is agony.

Finally, Stan huffs a defeated sort of sigh, and he mutters, "Just reminded me of some bad times."

They have spoken about their time apart, both before and after the initial portal incident. Ford knows that neither of them has gone into much detail, but they have told each other enough for them to know that neither of them was having a good time without his twin. Both dealt with homelessness, resorting to criminal activity to make ends meet, and crippling loneliness.

But what Stan says next, Ford is in no way expecting. "Some of Rico's guys, you know, and just, shitty Johns in general."

"Johns," Ford echoes, trying to make that word make sense in connection to his brother, but there's a mental block roughly the size of the Berlin Wall getting in the way.

"Yeah, Sixer," Stan says slowly. "Johns are—"

"I know what Johns are," Ford snaps. "Why would you—"

And Stan still isn't looking at him, but everything about him radiates shame. Shame. That's not—Stanley does not do shame, not like this. When Stan decides to do something, he stands by it firmly and stubbornly, even when he is so clearly in the wrong. He had risked the entire world, this entire dimension including the kids that he loves so dearly, by turning on the portal to bring Ford back, Ford who might have been dead for all Stan knew. He had known all the risks and dangers, and he just hadn't cared. In his mind, Ford was more important than it all, even if the odds were horribly stacked against him coming back.

Events big and small, Stan is never ashamed of himself. So why is that the emotion so clearly radiating from him in waves?

"Stanley, why would you be involved with Johns?" Ford still cannot make himself comprehend this.

"Come on, Sixer," Stan says miserably. "You really gonna make me spell this out?"

“Apparently I must,” Ford says, his stomach twisting, because no. No, it can’t be.

“Pa kicked me out of the house at barely seventeen years old,” Stan says. “Fifty bucks and a half packed duffle. Shit went bad real fast, and everything I tried to make ends meet just was worse and worse. I—I had to do something, and apparently I was good at it. Or at least good enough to get paid.”

There is some odd noise ringing in Ford’s ears that makes each new word Stan speaks harder and harder to hear while at the same time comprehension slams into him like a tidal wave.

His brother spent some amount of time—possibly years, possibly when not even a legal adult yet—so desperate to survive that he was forced into selling his body for men to do with it as they pleased. His brother had looked at his life and seen only one option to get the money needed to put food into his belly and that was to allow strange and cruel men to fuck him and throw whatever amount of coin his way after. His brother had to allow himself to be treated like an object, something to be used and then discarded, little better than trash.

The blood in Ford’s veins is somehow both ice and molten lava at the same time. He’s shaking and sweating, numb and burning.

“I know it’s—I didn’t want to tell you. I should have,” Stan is saying. “That way you’d know that I’m—I’m not—“

Ford feels the same way he did when Stan told him the truth of the differences in how their father treated them as children. The hurricane of rage clouds everything but the desire to know names. He wants to find these men. He wants to erase their existence immediately with his quantum destabilizer, but he also wants to prolong it, to make them truly understand how badly they fucked up, how unforgivable their actions were, how they could have destroyed and shattered the most precious thing Ford has ever known, which is something that Ford cannot abide.

“You deserve better than me.”

“What?” Stan’s defeated, broken statement slams Ford back into his body. Did he just—? “How dare you,” Ford hisses.

Stan flinches and starts to move away. “I’m sorry, I’ll—“

No. Absolutely not. Stan is not allowed to move even a centimeter away from him. Ford darts forward and grabs Stan in a tight hold, pulling him fully into his lap, clinging to him with a renewed desperation. Away from him is where Stan gets hurt. Ford has hurt him too in the past, but never again. He’ll die first. “Shut up, Stanley,” Ford says, and he buries his face into Stan’s neck and locks his hands around his back in a tight hold that Stan will not be able to break.

“Not gonna lie, I’m kind of confused,” Stan says after a moment.

The rage is not quelled, but Ford does recognize that he has not been clear. Time to rectify that mistake. He will not allow Stan to labor under any delusions as to his feelings. “Do not

ever talk about yourself like that again," Ford says through his teeth. "There is no one better than you. You are perfect. I am extremely angry right now, but not at you. I wish very much that I could find every person who treated you so terribly and disintegrate their atoms."

The tension in Stan's body starts to ease, just slightly. "Not to out myself as kind of a nerd—but only by necessity—you can't disintegrate non-radioactive atoms," he says.

"I will find a way," Ford promises in a dark, vengeful hiss. He is being fully serious, but his declaration makes Stan laugh. Ford is still angry. He will be angry about this for his entire life, but that beautiful sound of his brother laughing, a chuckle that builds up into a loud guffaw, lets Ford release at least some of the pressure threatening to make him snap.

"Sure you would, Poindexter," Stan says. "But—um—this is ok?"

"That you were hurt like that will never be ok to me," Ford says.

"No, I mean—" Ford's face is still pressed into his brother's neck, but he can practically hear him chewing on his bottom lip. "You're not—you know—"

"I don't know," Ford says.

"Fuck," Stan grumbles. "You don't think I'm disgusting? Like you don't want to call all this off?"

Ford lifts his head and stares at Stan bewildered. "What are you talking about?" Stan isn't exactly blushing, but his face is a bit red, and some of that impossible shame seems to be settling back into place. It's a dilemma, but Ford makes the choice to release his hold around his brother but only so that his hands are free to cup Stan's face. "I love you," Ford says, slowly and firmly. "I have loved you and wanted this since long before I understood what I wanted. What do you mean, call it off?"

A dread begins to seep into his bones. Does Stan not want this anymore, now that Ford knows? Does he not want him, now that Ford has proven capable of so easily bringing up these old hurts?

"Hey, hey, stop it," Stan says, all too gently, his own hands finding Ford's face. "I can see that giant brain of yours going into overdrive. I love you too. I want you too. I just—"

"Explain," Ford demands, his heart beating too fast, although Stan's hands on his face are grounding and soothing.

"I don't exactly feel good about that shit," Stan says, his eyes lowering. Ford rubs his thumbs over Stan's stubble rough cheeks. "It was fucked enough on its own, but I always used to—I thought if you knew, you'd hate me even more."

"I have never hated you, Stanley," Ford says. It's true. No matter how angry, how bitter, how desperately sad Ford was ever feeling in the forty years they were separated, hatred was never something he could muster up. Those negative emotions were real, and they did taint much of how he thought of his brother, but always still, in and around it all, Ford loved him.

There is nothing that either of them could ever do that would take that away. They are too ingrained into each other's souls.

Stan shrugs a bit. "Or be disappointed in me," he says in a manner that suggests it would be an inevitable and obvious way that Ford ought to feel, and that cuts Ford deeply. "Hey, what're you—" And then Stan's thumbs are moving over Ford's cheeks, and that's when Ford realizes that he's crying. And now that Ford realizes he's crying, the tears come harder. "Oh shit, Sixer, no," Stan says, so soft, so gentle, and now he's the one holding Ford close, his hands moving in slow, steady, soothing trails over Ford's neck and shoulders, his voice uttering a gentle mantra that he's there, it's ok.

It feels like it takes forever for Ford to calm down enough to force out the words, "I'm sorry."

"Sixer, no," Stan starts, but Ford shakes his head.

"No, I am," Ford sobs. "You—I made you feel like I would have—"

"Hey, no." Stan squeezes the back of his neck, and it helps Ford feel like he can breathe again. "I—fuck—I don't know, Sixer. Maybe you did. Maybe I was just fucked up about all on my own."

Ford sniffles, and it's a disgusting sound. He's always been a disgusting crier. Despite that they have the exact same face, he always thought Stan did it better. If someone can cry better than others. Certainly Stan never produced as much snot or got quite so blotchy and puffy. "Still, I never meant," Ford starts, and Stan shushes him.

"I know, Stanford, I know," Stan says. He pauses for a moment, and then he leans forward and kisses the tears from Ford's cheeks. "Hey, so we kind really beefed this thing up, huh?"

Ford huffs a wet chuckle. "Understatement." He frowns. "I'm sorry." Stan opens his mouth, but Ford plows on. "No, I am. I wanted—it was so perfect, Stanley. You were so perfect. I wanted to make you feel so good but—"

"You did," he says. "We can try again. I mean, not tonight. Mood's definitely killed, but maybe in the morning?"

"I would very much like that," Ford says. He leans forward just a bit, not quite closing the distance, until he sees the little hitch upwards of Stan's lips. Then Ford kisses his small smile. "Are you as tired as I am?"

"I think a marathon run of fucking worthy of teenagers would have been less exhausting than this talking about our feelings shit," Stan says.

They settle back together in bed, this time under the covers. Ford wraps Stan up in his arms, the press of skin to skin soothing. Even more so is the warmth of Stan's breath across his chest. Ford trails his hands along Stan's arm slung across his stomach, up and down his back. Stan's skin erupts in pleased goosebumps. Ford continues over his neck and then stops short.

Stan lets out a displeased grumble. “Why’d you stop?”

Ford has to swallow past a lump in his throat. “I—I almost touched your hair again. And I did it when you were—when you were upset—before you told me.”

“Hey, Sixer,” Stan starts.

“I’m sorry,” Ford says.

“Honestly, getting really sick of that phrase tonight.”

“Stanley,” Ford starts.

“No, I am,” Stan says. For a moment, they lie there, the calm broken again. Then, Stan sighs and asks lowly. “Remember what I told you about Pa?”

Immediately, Ford’s blood heats again, the anger starting to bubble towards a boil. Stan’s fingers dig into his side, both a warning and grounding. “He grabbed my hair a lot too,” Stan says. “To throw me around. ‘Cause that didn’t leave bruises like it did when he’d grab my arm or something.” Stan’s thumb starts to move in slow, steady trails over Ford’s ribs. “I hated people touching my hair. I hated aunts at family functions. I hated the couple of girls I went out with in high school. I hated guys at the gym or coaches ruffling it up. I hated the goddamned barber. I still do. But know what I never hated?”

Another lump forms up in Ford’s throat. Because he does know.

“I never hated this,” Stan says. “When it was just you and me. Maybe after I had a bad dream. Or you were reading some adventure book out loud. When it was just you and me, laying around like this, and yeah, we had on more clothes then.” Ford laughs wetly, and Stan snickers at his own joke. “But it was just like this, and you’d pet my hair or kind of drag your knuckles on my scalp, and I never hated that. I loved that.”

“Sap,” Ford accuses before Stan can. His voice only warbles slightly with the emotion as he buries his fingers into Stan’s hair, nails light on his scalp.

Stan melts. He melts just like he did when they were kids, when they curled up just like this—yes, with at least shorts on—as if they were the only two people in the world, locked into a perfect bubble of warmth and comfort and each other.

“Love you too,” Stan mumbles, starting to succumb to the exhaustion of the incredibly emotional evening.

“So much, Stanley,” Ford says, struggling himself, but he manages to keep himself awake, keep his fingers moving in steady trails until Stan falls asleep. Then, Ford is seconds behind him.

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